

The Atlantic

Donald Trump's Call to Ban Muslim Immigrants

The Republican frontrunner demands a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on.”



Charlie Neibergall / AP

RUSSELL BERMAN | 5:14 PM ET | POLITICS

Donald Trump is now calling for an end to all Muslim immigration into the

United States.

In a written statement late Monday afternoon, the Trump campaign said the Republican frontrunner wanted a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on.” As backing, Trump cited a controversial six-month-old survey from the right-wing Center for Security Policy finding that one-quarter of U.S. Muslim respondents believed that violence against Americans was justified as part of global jihad and that a slim majority “agreed that Muslims in America should have the choice of being governed according to Shariah.”

Trump has built his campaign juggernaut on the premise that he is willing to flout all standards of political correctness, drawing the support of Americans fearful of immigrants and favoring a muscular response to Islamic terrorism. In the aftermath of the Islamic State attack that killed 130 people in Paris, he's claimed—without evidence of truth—that “thousands” of Muslims were cheering the 9/11 attacks on rooftops in New Jersey, and he's seemed to suggest that he would support a registry of all Muslims in the U.S. And just days after the attack by two apparently-radicalized terrorists in San Bernadino, Trump has tried to outflank his Republican rivals, most of whom have called for rejecting refugees fleeing Syria because of security concerns.

Yet Trump's constitutionally-questionable call to place an explicit religious test on immigration and travel goes far beyond his previous statements.

For one, this was not an off-the-cuff remark, a response to a vague question, or even an idle retweet. Trump detailed his new position in a written statement sent to hundreds if not thousands of reporters covering the campaign. And it apparently extends beyond immigrants to Muslim-American citizens living overseas. It includes “everyone,” Hope Hicks, a campaign spokeswoman, [told](#)

The Hill.

“Without looking at the various polling data, it is obvious to anybody the hatred is beyond comprehension. Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine,” Trump said in his initial statement.

Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in Jihad, and have no sense of reason or respect for human life.

The statement amounts to a sharp rebuke of President Obama’s plea, delivered in an Oval Office address on Sunday night, that the nation “reject discrimination” against Muslims. “It is our responsibility to reject religious tests on who we admit into this country,” Obama said. “It’s our responsibility to reject proposals that Muslim Americans should somehow be treated differently. Because when we travel down that road, we lose.”

Trump’s call for a ban on Muslim immigration and travel drew swift and angry responses from candidates in both parties, as well as the White House.



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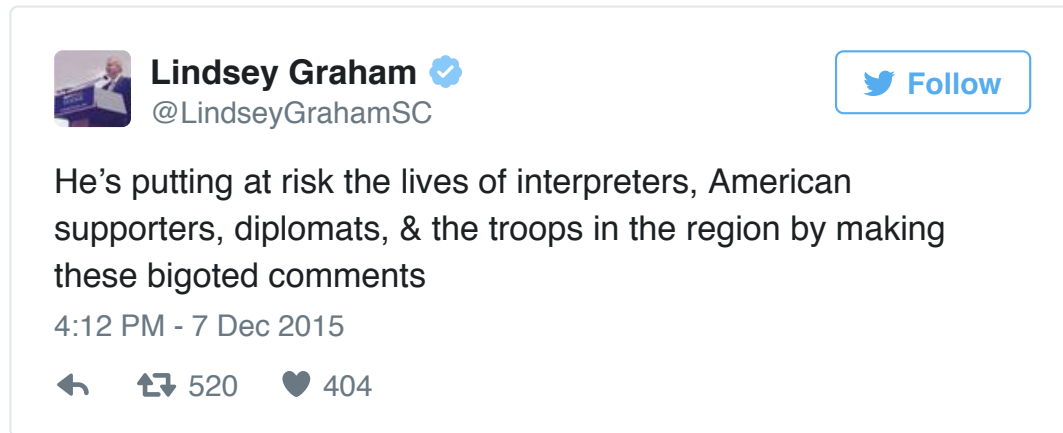


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Condemnations from Republicans quickly followed. Jeb Bush [tweeted](#) that Trump had become “unhinged.” John Kasich said Trump’s “outrageous divisiveness” was more reason why he was “entirely unsuited” to be president. Senator Lindsey Graham, a long-shot Republican rival, [tweeted](#) that Trump had “gone from making absurd comments to being downright dangerous with his bombastic rhetoric.”



Another Senate Republican, Jeff Flake of Arizona, [wrote](#) that “just when you think [Trump] can stoop no lower, he does.” The White House responded on Twitter by posting a quote, in all-caps, of Obama’s call to rejected religious tests.

Of the immediate Republican candidate reactions, it was Trump’s closest competitor in Iowa, Ted Cruz, who had the mildest response. “That is not my policy,” he [reportedly said](#) in South Carolina, before repeating his preference for a three-year moratorium on refugees coming from countries with an ISIS or al Qaeda presence.

The survey that Trump cited, by a D.C. think tank started by a former adviser to Ronald Reagan, was [repudiated](#) by a group at Georgetown University that tracks Islamophobia. “This survey should not be taken seriously,” the organization wrote in June after the survey was cited by Bill O’Reilly on Fox News.

It comes from an organization with a history of producing dubious claims and “studies” about the threat of shariah, and was administered using an unreliable methodology. Its proponents seize upon its shoddy findings, exaggerating and misrepresenting them to American audiences, and falsely claim that the survey data represents the views of Muslims nationwide.

Trump’s call for banning all Muslim immigrants came hours after a Monmouth University [survey](#) found that the GOP frontrunner is now trailing Ted Cruz in the important early-voting state of Iowa. The poll-obsessed Trump ignored that survey and instead [tweeted](#) a different Iowa poll showing him in the lead.

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